



# You say weeds, I say wildlife paradise

We have featured writings from Bug Woman in THE ARCHER before. Her excellent blog about the nature that is all around us in the big city continues at [bugwomanlondon.com](http://bugwomanlondon.com). Thanks to her for letting us print her observations on the community garden alongside East Finchley tube station.

We often underestimate the power of small spaces. Today, I decided to have a look at the car park beside East Finchley station. It's an unpromising area, with a steep embankment beside the tube lines, and then lots of small isolated areas of greenery.



As I walked towards the car park, I discovered that someone had been busy on the minute strip of steeply-sloping, partially-shaded ground by the station wall. There were two tiny vegetable gardens, one mostly empty, the other showing a good harvest of rainbow and swiss chard. There was a little sign saying 'No Litter', next to a discarded coffee cup, and another sign saying 'N2 Community Garden'.

I was delighted to see how insect-friendly this little plot of land was. There was borage, still in flower in November, white and red dead-nettle, hardy geraniums and ivy, and a Mahonia, already a mass of spiky sherbet-yellow flowers. Whatever time of year they emerge, queen bumblebees will find something to feed on here. What a good job this tiny garden is doing.

I marched on into the car park itself. What a barren place it looks! And yet, there are tiny islands of green, full of ribwort plantain and purple toadflax, dandelions and feverfew, nipplewort and thistles.

And, as I got close to the back of Diploma Court I could

see where the municipal planting of pyracantha, probably for security purposes, was pouring over the fence in a sea of red and orange and yellow. Tangled up amongst all the primary colours were the black berries of ivy. This is a feast for thrushes of all kinds, from blackbirds to fieldfares to redwings, and, if we're lucky, even waxwings if they pay us a visit this year.

By the pay machines, little hummocks of moss were turning the smallest pieces of detritus into soil in those spots where cars didn't crush everything. Tiny buddleia plants were emerging from every chink in the tarmac carpet. I had a sudden flash forward to a world when cars didn't exist, and the plants had taken over. Will this space one day be a honey-scented buddleia forest? It seemed the most likely immediate progression.

I head back to the High Street. I note that the N2 Community Garden folk have hung baskets full of flowering heather on the tree. I have the feeling that the power of life to survive in the most hostile of conditions is the lesson here.



Fine Voice: Young singers from Bishop Douglass entertain their party guests.

## In party mood at Bishop Douglass

By Daphne Chamberlain

Bishop Douglass School held its annual Senior Citizens Christmas Party last month. The school said, "We value our community links, and are proud of our Year 10 pupils who raised an amazing £1,600 for the event, prepared the hall, and then served and entertained

## Arsenal fan killed in strong winds

By Janet Maitland

A 90-year-old Arsenal fan died after he was blown against the side of a bus during strong winds on 5 December.

A gust of wind is thought to have swept Ernie Crouch off the pavement and into the side of a moving bus near Finchley Central station at about 12.30pm. An ambulance was called but Mr Crouch died at the scene a short time later.

According to fans on social media, he had supported Arsenal since 1934, and had been on his way to see them play Sunderland when the accident happened.

Pat Hale of Arsenal Supporters club told BBC Radio 5 Live: "Football was just his life. He travelled to every away game with us and always had his regular front seat."

our guests. Thank you to everyone who helped make this a truly special evening."

All the guests we spoke to were full of praise for the very courteous and attentive service from the pupils, and for the excellent dinner. One of the regulars said: "The meal is always good, but this year's was the best ever." Guests were offered sherry, wine, fruit juices, and a traditional Christmas dinner, with chunky vegetarian sausages for non-meat eaters.

There were carols led by the school choir, two relaxed bingo games, crackers and personal seating cards and programmes for each guest in the festively decorated hall. Before the guests left (many by organised transport) Father Christmas had a

parting gift for each one.

Acting headteacher Martin Tissot said that events such as the Senior Christmas party were an opportunity to meet and speak with the community, and guests agreed that all involved did the school proud.

### Achievements

The school's website shows that this has been a year of achievement for Bishop Douglass, with a report from Ofsted placing them in the top 3% of schools in the country for value-added progress in GCSE results. They have a 99% A Level pass rate too.

Pupils and their families also raised over £1,100 last term for MacMillan Cancer Support, the North London Hospice and Save the Children.

### All Saints' Church, Durham Road, East Finchley Church of England

Sunday masses at 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m.

Weekday masses at 10.00 a.m.

(Coffee served after mass on Sunday and Thursday)

Prayer requests are gladly accepted.

The Parish has a *flourishing* social life.

Contact the Vicar, Fr Christopher Hardy,  
on 020 8883 9315.

All Saints' also has a strong musical tradition and an enthusiastic choir.

Experienced singers are always welcome.  
Contact Geoffrey Hanson on 020 8444 9214.

<http://www.allsaints-eastfinchley.org.uk>

A friendly welcome awaits you

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